

Spotlight

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A Quarterly Newsletter of the Dorchester County Department of Social Services

October - December 2008

Donette English Selected for 2008 Customer Service Award



Donette English has been a Child Support Specialist in the Child Support Division of Dorchester County Social Services (DSS) for 14 years.

Donette was selected for this award for consistently exceeding expectations by delivering world class customer service to child support customers, her co-workers, and DSS stakeholders. She is keenly aware of the customer's needs, and she ensures each person receives respectful treatment, in a cordial and efficient manner.

Donette has excellent communication skills and she also takes time to listen to customers. She is respected by her peers for her expertise, her willingness to provide guidance, and her knowledge of child support issues. Her compassion and caring for

customers inspires fellow staff.

Her ability to go above and beyond the call of duty contributes to a high level of customer satisfaction. A fellow co-worker praised her knowledge of intake, establishment, and interstate processes. Another staff member commented, "She is always willing to help, no matter what the job is." She has taken on additional responsibilities by serving on the Training Engineers committee, which trains new staff on Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).

These factors make Donette English a most deserving recipient of the Department of Human Resources (DHR).

Dorchester Selects Adoptive Parent of the Year

Elisa Camper of Cambridge has been nominated as Dorchester County's Adoptive Parent of the Year. Ms. Camper has adopted a pair of brothers into her home. She has fostered a total of four (4) children. Her initial approval as a licensed provider was in October of 2005.

Shareen Camper, Supervisor of Foster Care and Adoption, states "Ms. Camper should be recognized for her commitment to the children she has welcomed into her heart and



Elisa Camper

home." The child's safety and well-being are given top priority. Placement of children in families increases the likelihood of a positive future. Ms. Camper worked closely with DSS staff and the birth family toward a plan of reunification for the children. She provided critical supports to ensure that family connections were maintained. Now that they both are adopted, Elisa supports them in maintaining those connections.

If you are interested in becoming a foster or adoptive parent, contact the Dorchester County Department of Social Services at 410-901-4278. An informational session is being held on Saturday, April 11, 9:30-11:30 a.m. at Dorchester Social Services, 627 Race Street, Cambridge, Maryland.

Dorchester DSS Team Exceeds Goal for MD Charities

Dorchester County DSS is proud to announce that the 2008 Maryland (MD) Charity Campaign raised \$6477, the most money ever. This amount exceeds the 2007 total \$3467 by 46%. We also had 100% participation.

The MD Charity Campaign is a part of the National United Way Campaign, which is held yearly in the fall. There are some key local charities, including The Care & Share Fund, Inc., Habitat for Humanity of Talbot and Dorchester Counties, and the Dorchester County Commission on the Aging. Money donated to these charities remains in the local community.

This year's theme was "Go for the Gold, Champions Give in a Winning Way". The agency had a creative team of four, this year including Chairperson Sue Todd, Victoria Stanley, Kathleen Rineholt, and Mary Kaufmann. They are pictured with Lynn Bowens of the Department of Human Resources (DHR). The team encouraged participants to count their blessings and put cash into individual blessing banks.

DHR provided incentives to donors. Staff donating \$52.00 through payroll deductions received a denim day pass for the month of January, as did the (\$100-\$259) Bronze level donors. Silver level contributors, who gave between \$260 - \$499 received 2 hours of administrative leave in addition to denim days. Gold level contributors, who gave over \$500 received a special pin, 4 hours Administrative leave, and denim days. We are happy to report that we had 3 Gold level donors, 3 Silver level donors, 16 Bronze level donors, and 9 payroll donors who received awards. Thanks to all DSS staff for participating in this winning campaign.



Front Row: Kathleen Rineholt; Second Row, 1 to r: Sue Todd, Victoria Stanley, Mary Kaufmann; Back Row, 1 to r: Lynn Bowens, Holly Tull

Dorchester County DSS 2008 Annual Report Highlights

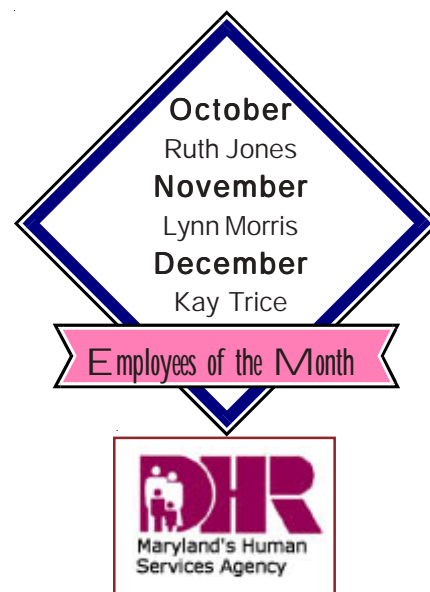
Our Annual Report for 2008 is indicative of the continued fine work our staff has done to address the growing community need caused by increases in utility, gas and fuel costs, the economic slowdown and closure of numerous businesses resulting in the loss of over 400 jobs. The following are a few of our most noteworthy accomplishments:

- The Department has again met the stringent performance standards of the Council on Accreditation of Services to Children and Families and is reaccredited.
- 90.8% of consumers surveyed rated our services as excellent or good.
- 80% of our demanding stakeholder agencies rated our services excellent or good.
- Final orders of Adoption for four (4) children were achieved.
- Family Preservation Services worked diligently to keep children safe and maintained 98.9% (259 of 262) of the children served in their homes thus avoiding foster care.
- We provided energy assistance to 2886 Dorchester County households.
- 75% (3 of 4) of children with a permanency plan of adoption

were finalized within one year of placement.

- Habitat for Humanity of Talbot and Dorchester Counties (HFHTDC) built its third house this year in Cambridge and has acquired 3 properties to continue to build decent housing for families.
- The Director is working with a group of committed citizens to coordinate a community-wide effort to initiate a Boys & Girls Club in September 2009.

The Department responds to individual and families' needs through cash assistance (Temporary Cash Assistance), Food Stamps, Medical Assistance, Maryland Energy Assistance (MEAP), Long Term Care, Work Opportunities, and a number of other smaller assistance programs. Direct public assistance comprised 90% of the 2008 budget with only 10% expended on salaries and administration.



SPOTLIGHT on DSS

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